

ACTIVITY: Fishing

CASE: GSAF 2002.01.04

DATE: Friday January 4, 2002

LOCATION: The attack took place on the sand banks of the Royal Natal Yacht Club in Durban Harbour, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

NAME: Imraan Sheik

DESCRIPTION: The fisherman is a 16-year-old male.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: At 02h00, the air temperature was 73.4°F [23°C], dew point was 66.2°F [19°C], humidity 78%, sea level pressure 30.04 inches [1017 hPa], visibility was 6.2 miles [10 km] and wind direction was NNE at 10.4 mph [16.7 km/h].

MOON PHASE: Waning Gibbous, 70% of the moon was illuminated. Full Moon, December 30, 2001.

DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE: "Knee-deep"

TIME: 02h00



Imraan Sheik, a year after he lost his leg to a shark.

NARRATIVE: Anita Sheik, Imraan's mother, said her son loves fishing and fishes almost every day, but on Thursday night he was hesitant about going. "Maybe it was a sign, a sort of premonition," she said.

In the early hours of the morning, Imraan Sheik and a group of friends were fishing in the shallow water when a shark grabbed his leg. Sheik punched and kicked the shark, stabbing it with his fishing rod until the shark released him. Sheik's best friend, Kevin Moonsamy, said the actual attack happened very fast, but helping his friend swim back to land took about half an hour.

INJURY: The teen's right leg was severely bitten below the knee.

FIRST AID: When Imraan and Kevin approached the shore, another fisherman, Jack Potgieter, came to their assistance. "I heard screaming and turned to see what was happening," he said. Potgieter put a towel around Sheik's leg and helped drag him to the shore. The paramedics arrived soon afterward and the patient was transported to Addington Hospital in Durban.

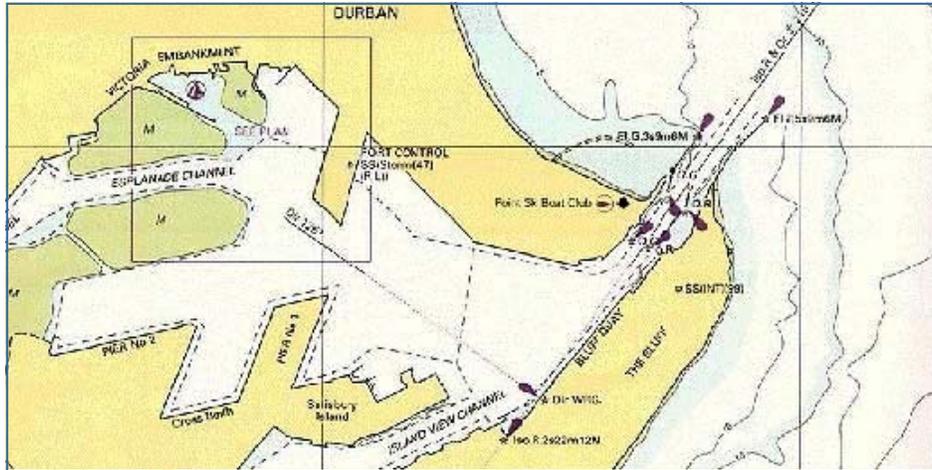
TREATMENT: The patient's right leg was surgically amputated at 16h00 that afternoon.



*Royal Natal Yacht Club
on Victoria Embankment, Durban*

SPECIES INVOLVED: The attack was thought to involve a Zambezi shark, *Carcharhinus leucas*.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Andrew Gifford, Shark Research Institute-South Africa



NOTE: Ten years after Sheik lost his leg, Tjaart Kruger, owner of TAP Kruger Orthopaedics, read an interview with Sheik in the Daily News. In the interview (excerpt below) Sheik said his disability, and a decrepit wood and iron leg, restricted his movement and prevented him from finding work.

Sheik was taking the train daily from Chatsworth to fish at Durban's south pier, but it is difficult getting to the beach with his prosthetic limb. He said he often suffers phantom pains and terrible blisters caused by the prosthetic limb. "A year after the attack, the limb was donated to me," said Sheik. "It is badly damaged and I cannot afford to buy a new one. To keep it together I use bandages, nuts and bolts, sticky tape and glue. It weighs almost 10kg and is difficult to walk with. In fact when I put it on, I have to hold it in position or it slips off. This also takes a toll on my hands and back. But I have no choice. It's either that or I have to walk with crutches. That restricts the use of my hands and I cannot move around freely." Hoping he could get a new limb from Wentworth Hospital, he went to Addington Hospital, where his leg was amputated, to secure his file, but the hospital was unable to locate his file.



Imraan Sheik has a fitting for his new prosthetic leg donated by Tjaart Kruger.

Picture: Marilyn Bernard

Kruger, an orthotist and prosthetist, was moved by Sheik's plight, tracked him down, and donated a R60 000 prosthetic leg to him. He said the new fibreglass limb will be much lighter and comprised of three parts: the socket, knee and foot. "Because Imraan loves to fish and go to the beach, the knee will be fitted with a special manual lock. This will allow him to walk easily on the shore without falling over." Kruger said.

"God bless you! God bless you! People like you make the world a better place," were the emotional words of gratitude expressed by Sheik to Kruger.

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